Attention to the longstanding ties between top Iranian officials and al-Qa'ida leaders, including Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has been eschewed by a pervasive fundamental attribution error: ''Shiite Iran will not work with Sunni militants comprising the ranks of al-Qa'ida.'' This assessment fully ignores readily available evidence to the contrary. Indeed, such relationships span back to the early 1990s, when top officials from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' clandestine Qods Force, working in concert with Iran's chief global terrorist proxy, Lebanese Hizballah, began training and equipping bin Laden's warriors. Then, following the 1996 attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 Americans, more evidence surfaced of operational linkages between al-Qa'ida and the Qods Force, an official Iranian paramilitary organization which possesses a mandate from Iran's Supreme Leader to fund, train, and equip Islamist terrorists. These very operational linkages are referenced within the 9/11 Commission Report, whose authors acknowledged the relationship between al-Qa'ida and Iran demonstrates that Sunni-Shiite divisions ''did not necessarily pose an insurmountable barrier to cooperation in terrorist operations.''

Since 9/11, these partnerships have become all the more pronounced. Hundreds of al-Qa'ida members, along with family members of Core al-Qa'ida leaders like Osama bin Laden, have found refuge inside Iran. Officials now know Iran's minister of defense, formerly a commander of the Qods Force, furnished safe houses for many of these terrorists. Officials also know that while under ''house arrest'' inside Iran al-Qa'ida's top military commanders like Saif al-Adl were able to coordinate attacks against Western targets. Examples of these attacks include the May 2003 bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia that killed eight Americans.

Since 2005, Iran has rapidly evolved from a theocracy into a garrison state. With help from the Islamic Republic's unelected officials, notably Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (a former member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps), the IRGC has seized control of most critical sectors inside Iran. Having secured their future grips on power by elevating the domestic roles of the IRGC, Iran's leaders are now pursuing their lust for regional hegemonic status. Their strategy entails both a persistent quest for nuclear weapons—the acquisition of which Iran's leaders view as the means to ensure their recent regional gains will be irreversible—and support of terrorist organizations which are able to help Iran destabilize unfriendly states, and perhaps even Iran's entire neighborhood.

Today, the Middle East is more volatile than at any time since the Islamic Revolution's leaders seized control of Iran, and hardliners in Tehran are better positioned than ever before to influence the future of this critical region. Concurrently, with support from a state sponsor like Iran, al-Qa'ida will be better positioned than ever before to strike the West and our allies, and to foment chaos in both the Arab world and South Asia that would ultimately benefit Iran. As the implications of working partnerships between Iran and al-Qa'ida carry weighty implications for not just the security of the Middle East and South Asia, but also America's national security interests, it is incumbent upon policy makers in Washington to address this issue. For if left unchecked, Iran's relationship with al-Qa'ida could cost America and our allies dearly.

This report focuses on the history of Iran's relationship with al-Qa'ida, and briefly addresses potential implications of these ties. Additionally, its author provides a list of recommended action items for Members of the United States Congress, as well as a list of questions that may help Members develop a better understanding of this issue through interactions with defense and intelligence officials.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 639

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 639, the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROKITA). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

STORING NUCLEAR WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, this marks the first of what I hope to be many times to address you and my colleagues on an issue that I have been graced with having the responsibility to deal in the public policy arena, and that's the issue of nuclear waste.

When people talk about nuclear waste and this debate about where it is and why it's there, they primarily talk about our nuclear utilities. Especially after Fukushima Daiichi, people understand that when you store high-level nuclear waste onsite and if there's a disaster that occurs and if the pools run dry, then you might have a melting which might spread radioactivity, and that's not good for anybody. That's a good debate to have because we have nuclear waste stored all over this country.

But I'm not here really to talk about the private for-profit sector, the nuclear industry today. I'm here to tell another story, another story that really talks about why we have government and why there's still a need for some government entities.

Back during World War II—and we just heard my colleague talk about the Honor Flights—back during World War II, we decided as a Nation to win these wars. One way to make sure that we wouldn't lose thousands upon thousands of soldiers in an invasion of Japan was to develop the nuclear bomb. Two were dropped; the war ended. Many people historically know that development, that occurred because of the Manhattan Project.

What I think a lot of people don't know is that we still are dealing with much of the history of winning the war in the Manhattan Project and that winning the Cold War relied upon a strong military and a strong nuclear deterrence. So even after World War II, we continued to develop nuclear weapons, which we deal with today.

So I had a chance to visit during our last district work period, I took a day and visited a place called Hanford, Washington. Hanford, Washington was part of the Manhattan Project. Hanford was the site that the U.S. military picked to help produce plutonium. The ''Fat Man'' bomb was developed there. That area was picked for a lot of reasons. There weren't a lot of people there. As you can see, the Columbia River is right next to it. You had some low-cost power production, and so it was a good site. And, hence, people got moved off the land, the government took over, and the government has been controlling hundreds of acres in Washington State even today.

The result of the Cold War and winning World War II is that millions of gallons of nuclear waste now reside in Hanford, Washington. And I'm not exaggerating. In fact, 53 million gallons of nuclear waste is onsite. And what's interesting about Hanford, of course, when you started storing this nuclear waste, our technology, our information, our knowledge was not as great as it is now. The way we stored this material then would not be an acceptable process today. It is an environmental disaster and a hazard that has to be cleaned up.

You have approximately 174 storage tanks. These storage tanks are from 750,000 gallons to a million gallons, all with nuclear waste in these tanks. These tanks are buried, as it says here, 10 feet underground and 250 feet above the water table, a mile from the Columbia River. Some of these tanks are leaking. It's just not a good thing for us to have. And so the government has been trying to deal with this one site of nuclear waste in this country.

Why do I bring this before you, Mr. Speaker, and why is this important? Because in 1982, part of the process of dealing with Hanford was to pass a law.

□ 1330

The law was called the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, and in that law it says, We've got a solution. We're going to collect all the high-level nuclear waste, and we have a storage facility that we're going to place it in. And that place is Yucca Mountain. Now, many of you may have heard about Yucca Mountain before. I've visited it twice. Yucca Mountain is in a desert, and it's a mountain. So I do the side-by-side comparisons here.

Right now at Hanford we have 53 million gallons of nuclear waste on site. Yucca Mountain, which is a site we designed, we picked. We studied for decades. We spent $12.5 billion. We currently have no nuclear waste there.

The nuclear waste at Hanford is stored 10 feet underground. The nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain would be stored a thousand feet underground. The nuclear waste at Hanford is 250 feet above the groundwater. The nuclear waste at Yucca will be stored a thousand feet above the water table. The nuclear waste at Hanford is a mile